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6 OVERSIGHT HEARING ON:

7 EXAMINING THE PRESIDENT'S FISCAL YEAR 2025

8 BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

9 Tuesday, June 4, 2024

10 House of Representatives,

11 Subcommittee on Federal Lands,

12 Committee on Natural Resources,

13 Washington, D.C.

14

15 The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:15 a.m. in
16 Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Tom Tiffany
17 [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

18

19 Present: Representatives Tiffany, McClintock, Fulcher,
20 Stauber, Curtis, Bentz, Westerman; Kamlager-Dove, and Leger
21 Fernandez.

22 Also present: Representatives LaMalfa; and Stansbury.

23

24 *Mr. Tiffany. The Subcommittee on Federal Lands will
25 come to order.

26 Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a
27 recess of the Subcommittee at any time.

28 The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on
29 the President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request for the U.S.
30 Forest Service.

31 I ask unanimous consent that the following members be
32 allowed to participate in today's hearing from the dais: the
33 gentleman from California, Mr. LaMalfa.

34 Without objection, so ordered.

35 Under Committee rule 4(f), any oral opening statements
36 at hearings are limited to the Chairman and the Ranking
37 Minority Member. I therefore ask unanimous consent that all
38 other members' opening statements be made part of the hearing
39 record if they are submitted in accordance with Committee
40 rule 3(o).

41 Without objection, so ordered.

42 I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

43

44 STATEMENT OF THE HON. TOM TIFFANY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
45 CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN

46

47 *Mr. Tiffany. I would like to begin by welcoming Chief
48 Moore back before the Subcommittee. Chief Moore, it is good
49 to have you here again. We appreciate you taking the time to
50 answer our questions on your agency's Fiscal Year 2025 budget
51 request.

52 Improving the health of our Nation's forests and
53 combating the devastating wildfire crisis are some of the
54 most pressing issues before this Committee. The scale of
55 this challenge is immense and cannot be overstated. For far
56 too long communities, particularly those out West, have had
57 to bear the brunt of catastrophic wildfire years with
58 seemingly no end in sight. Unfortunately, the Forest
59 Service's Fiscal Year 2025 budget fails to rise to meet this
60 challenge.

61 Due to reckless Democratic spending during the previous
62 Congress, the Forest Service received roughly \$11.5 billion
63 in supplemental funding. This funding was touted as
64 transformative and the only tool the agency needed to
65 increase the pace and scale of forest management. Years
66 later, it is hard to see any difference this funding has made
67 on the ground.

68 For the second year in a row, the Forest Service budget

69 proposes treating fewer acres than the year before, with a
70 target of four million acres treated. Based on the agency's
71 own estimates, this puts the Forest Service roughly two
72 million acres behind the goals they laid out in the 10-year
73 wildlife crisis strategy.

74 As we know from previous investigative reporting and
75 Committee oversight, these numbers are still likely inflated
76 due to Forest Service's policies of counting acres treated
77 more than once. I am happy that my bipartisan ACRES Act
78 passed the House last year, and I hope the Senate can
79 consider this legislation quickly. However, I am still
80 disappointed that this issue even requires legislation to
81 fix.

82 Chief Moore, the American people deserve transparency
83 and accountability, and I would strongly encourage your
84 agency to improve the quality of this data.

85 Concerningly, the number of acres treated is not the
86 only Forest Service target that is being missed. Last year
87 the Forest Service also fell short of its timber harvest
88 targets by roughly 260 million acres. And once again, this
89 budget has lowered the timber targets from 3.4 billion board
90 feet to 3.2 billion board feet for the next two years.

91 [Chart]

92 *Mr. Tiffany. Throughout this Congress I have often
93 shown the chart behind me, which demonstrates the

94 relationship between failing to harvest timber and
95 catastrophic wildfires. There is a direct relationship
96 between our continuing failure to harvest timber and the
97 historically catastrophic wildfire years we are experiencing.
98 It is therefore deeply troubling that, instead of attempting
99 to remedy the shortcomings of failing to meet the agency's
100 target this year, the Forest Service has apparently chosen to
101 lower its timber target by 400 million board feet.

102 This is not walking down the right path to forest
103 restoration. We have heard from our land managers, including
104 Chief Moore, about the need for a paradigm shift in the way
105 we manage our forests. I agree. But it continues to be
106 abundantly clear that funding alone will not deliver this
107 shift, and we must address the regulatory and litigation
108 obstacles that continue to impede management efforts.

109 This budget once again seeks more funding to do less
110 management, while also failing to offer any reforms to
111 address longstanding barriers to forest management. I am
112 rightfully skeptical.

113 While I have concerns with this proposed budget, I do
114 recognize the enormous challenges facing the Forest Service,
115 and hope that we can discuss ways to bring about the changes
116 to see better results. There is broad agreement on the need
117 to turn the tide against this wildfire crisis and restore
118 health and resiliency to our ailing forests.

119 We also know that we need to aggressively suppress
120 wildland -- wildfires threatening our communities, take care
121 of our brave wildland firefighters in a fiscally responsible
122 manner, and support our local forest products industry.

123 I want to once again thank Chief Randy Moore for being
124 here today.

125 We are committed to working with you and your agency on
126 these solutions, and we look forward to hearing more from you
127 today.

128 [The prepared statement of Mr. Tiffany follows:]

129

130 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

131

132 *Mr. Tiffany. With that I now yield back and recognize
133 Ranking Member Kamlager-Dove for her opening statement.
134

135 STATEMENT OF THE HON. SYDNEY KAMLAGER-DOVE, A REPRESENTATIVE
136 IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

137

138 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Thank you, Chair Tiffany and Chief
139 Moore.

140 You are back before us again in the Federal Lands
141 Subcommittee, and I look forward to the conversation today.
142 Your time is valuable. We know this. And as we enter this
143 year's fire season, I would like to offer my sincere
144 gratitude for the work that you and your agency do each and
145 every day, especially for Californians and Angelenos.

146 The Forest Service is charged with sustaining the
147 health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests
148 and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future
149 generations. That is no small task, as the Nation's forest
150 and grasslands make up 193 million acres nationwide. And
151 last month was the hottest May on record and the twelfth
152 consecutive month to claim that title. Let me repeat that:
153 12 straight months of record highs. A full calendar of
154 record busting temperatures, and not just in the House
155 Oversight Committee. This is unprecedented, and should be
156 indisputable and affirmation that climate change is affecting
157 our public lands.

158 Such drastic climate changes make the work of the Forest
159 Service ever more complex and essential as fire seasons rage

160 longer, drought intensifies, and our forests face
161 considerable resiliency obstacles. So it would make sense to
162 me that we would be aiming to meet the Forest Service's
163 budget requests, fully fund their vital mitigation and
164 response accounts, amplify the innovative work being done to
165 modernize forest products, and ensure that the agency has
166 significant support for staffing and capacity challenges.
167 After all, that is how you help government work.

168 Unfortunately, we have continued to see a cycle of
169 chronic and unsustainable underfunding for the agency,
170 underfunding and then blame gaming. In fact, just a few
171 months ago the Chief warned us that lower appropriated funds,
172 required cost-of-living adjustments, and inflated costs of
173 operation are leading to funding gaps in salaries and other
174 internal services among the Forest Service. We must listen
175 to our agency leaders when they express such significant
176 concerns.

177 Democrats delivered with monumental investments from the
178 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction
179 Act, which have certainly helped. I know that the
180 firefighter pay increase from the infrastructure law has been
181 an important hiring and retention tool for the Forest
182 Service, and I am pleased to see \$216 million in the Fiscal
183 Year 2025 budget to continue this initiative, one which we
184 must make permanent.

185 Despite the gains from these investments, the Forest
186 Service still faces vacancies in fire-related positions and
187 general staffing gaps in non-fire positions. Such gaps
188 directly tie to project delays and management challenges
189 across the agency that my Republican counterparts often
190 attribute to the legal burdens of environmental review.

191 However, we know that reviewing, permitting, and project
192 management activities require staff capacity more than
193 anything to execute the tools we have already granted the
194 Forest Service, tools such as the 12 new authorities Congress
195 has passed in the last ten years meant to reduce the
196 permitting process or the role of judicial review in the
197 project approval proposal.

198 The Forest Service doesn't need new authority or
199 additional waivers of our bedrock environmental laws. It
200 needs sustainable funding and additional staff capacity. It
201 is promising to see a prioritization from the Biden
202 Administration to address staffing challenges across the
203 agency to support a growing demand for outdoor recreation,
204 restoration projects aimed at adapting to a changing climate,
205 protection of cultural resources, and providing clean water
206 resources nationwide.

207 Chief Moore, I look forward to hearing from you and
208 listening to our discussion today. I hope that my colleagues
209 and I can work together to support a beneficial and strong

210 Forest Service budget for Fiscal Year 2025.

211 [The prepared statement of Ms. Kamlager-Dove follows:]

212

213 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

214

215 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. With that, I yield back.

216 *Mr. Tiffany. Thank you, Representative Kamlager-Dove,
217 for that opening statement. And now I am going to recognize
218 the Chairman of the full Committee, Mr. Westerman, if he is
219 ready for his opening statement.

220 Sir, are you prepared?

221 *Mr. Westerman. Always prepared, Mr. Chairman.

222 [Laughter.]

223

224 STATEMENT OF THE HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
225 CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

226

227 *Mr. Westerman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

228 Chief Moore, thank you for being here today. You know,
229 it has been good to work with you and to visit with you and
230 to understand the challenges that forestry and America face,
231 and I know you are on the front lines of that. It is
232 something I am very passionate about. But as we look at the
233 budget request from this year and we see the increase, I
234 think you can understand why we have got some heartburn about
235 when you look at the history of the funding that we have sent
236 to the Forest Service.

237 You know, when I first came to Congress the big issue
238 was fire funding. And we did the fire funding fix. And then
239 we did the Great American Outdoors Act, and included the
240 Forest Service in the Great American Outdoors Act. There was
241 the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021 that gave more
242 money to the Forest Service. I did not vote for that one. I
243 did not vote for the Inflation Reduction Act. But all of
244 those bills put more funding into the Forest Service. And it
245 doesn't appear that anything is getting better with the
246 health of our forests across the country.

247 And I know you face a lot of challenges, and a lot of
248 that is because of Congress, and because we have failed to

249 give you the tools and the authorities to be able to go in
250 and do the work that you need to do. And we are in a
251 situation now that you and I have discussed, where it is kind
252 of a triage mode. There is so many -- or there is a limited
253 number of resources, there is a limited number of people who
254 can do management. And the areas that seem most critical to
255 protect are those wildland-urban interfaces, their
256 transportation corridors, transmission corridors, watersheds.

257 And it is almost like the -- I will use the term "the
258 troops'' -- that are out there to manage the forest are being
259 -- are retreating back to these areas, and trying to create
260 the last defense against catastrophic wildfire, and this is
261 something that has come about because of years of not being
262 able to manage the rest of the forest. And we know that, to
263 be able to manage forests, we have got to have markets for
264 the products.

265 Mr. McClintock has had success in passing legislation
266 that has been very beneficial down around South Lake Tahoe in
267 doing management that has stopped wildfire, yet there is
268 hardly any markets for those products that come off, and it
269 ends up costing the taxpayer, you know, a thousand to a
270 couple thousand dollars an acre to be able to go in and
271 manage the forest simply because the mill infrastructure is
272 not there that was once available. And we have seen that in
273 many places in the West.

274 And being from Arkansas, where we have a vibrant forest
275 products economy -- I know you are from Louisiana, where they
276 have the same -- my constituents probably don't understand,
277 nor should they have to understand why we have to spend
278 Federal dollars to be able to do management on the forest.
279 That is a foreign concept because, usually, when you do
280 management on the forest, it generates revenue to not only
281 pay for itself but to go back into the landowners' pockets,
282 which in this case is the Treasury and the taxpayer.

283 And there was one time in the history of this country
284 where the Forest Service actually put more money back into
285 the Treasury than it cost to run the Forest Service. We are
286 not anywhere remotely even close to that anymore, and we are
287 seeing the levels of fire danger increase. We are seeing the
288 amount of land that is subject to catastrophic wildfire
289 increase. We are seeing more mills close, and the train is
290 going in the wrong direction.

291 So I know that you know this, I know this, and we ought
292 to be able to work together to figure out how to turn the
293 train around and make America's forests all that they should
294 be. So I look forward to hearing your testimony and to
295 having a dialogue about how we can work together to use the
296 resources that we have got to create a better situation for
297 America's forests, which means creating a better situation
298 for America's wildlife, for America's air quality, for

299 America's water quality, and all the other benefits that go
300 with a healthy forest.

301 [The prepared statement of Mr. Westerman follows:]

302

303 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

304

305 *Mr. Westerman. With that I yield back.

306 *Mr. Tiffany. Thank you, Chairman Westerman. We will
307 now move on to witness testimony.

308 And let me remind the witness that, under Committee
309 rules, you must limit your oral statement to five minutes,
310 but your entire statement will appear in the hearing record.

311 To begin your testimony please press the on button on
312 the microphone.

313 We use timing lights. When you begin the light will
314 turn green. At the end of five minutes the light will turn
315 red.

316 I would like to introduce Mr. Randy Moore, Chief of the
317 U.S. Forest Service.

318 Chief Moore, you are recognized for five minutes.

319

320 STATEMENT OF RANDY MOORE, CHIEF, U.S. FOREST SERVICE, U.S.
321 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

322

323 *Mr. Moore. Thank you, Chair Tiffany, Ranking Member
324 Kamlager-Dove, and also the members of the Subcommittee.
325 Thank you for inviting me to testify today. We are grateful
326 for your continued support.

327 The President's budget names three primary goals for us:
328 to modernize wildland fire management, to sustain investments
329 critical to our mission, and to ensure equitable access and
330 benefits to Americans. Today I will share our progress as we
331 put money to work to confront serious challenges. I will
332 share how our work will continue to be a sound investment.

333 We directly steward about 193 million acres of National
334 Forest System lands. We reach across boundaries to assist
335 States, Tribes, communities, and private landowners to keep
336 millions more acres of healthy forests productive. Every
337 American benefits from these forests, directly or indirectly.
338 Together these lands provide basic needs for life, clean air
339 and water, while they contribute to energy production and
340 support local economies. National forests alone contribute
341 more than 410,000 jobs and \$44.3 billion to the gross
342 domestic product.

343 To sustain productivity and health, forests must be able
344 to withstand threats posed by wildfire, climate change,

345 drought, insects, and disease, and on and on. We invested
346 resources to act and ensure that they do just that.
347 Foremost, we prioritize work to reduce wildfire risk,
348 safeguard communities, and create resilient forests.

349 In 2022 we launched a 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy
350 and we moved to implement it. Annual appropriations, coupled
351 with the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the
352 Inflation Reduction Act, provided an extraordinary
353 opportunity to take bold and strategic actions. We did just
354 that. We progressed to deliver on a promise to increase the
355 pace and scale of our treatments. We are not just treating
356 any acre, we are treating the right acres in the right places
357 and at the right scale. We focused initial efforts on 21
358 priority landscapes within Western firesheds at the highest
359 risk. They account for roughly 80 percent of wildfire risk.

360 These investments are paying dividends. Experts
361 reported roughly \$700 billion worth of housing and
362 infrastructure are at risk within these priority landscapes.
363 This includes \$6.5 billion of municipal watersheds which
364 supply drinking water to 12 million people. In the last two
365 years we reduced the average wildfire risk to these assets by
366 8 percent for infrastructure, 8 percent for housing, and 12
367 percent for watersheds. That means that we protected more
368 than \$300 million worth of homes at risk.

369 In the Stanislaus National Forest, for example, 17

370 communities are at lower risk, including towns of Cold
371 Springs and Strawberry. A million socially vulnerable people
372 are at less risk. Nearly half of national forest lands and
373 priority landscapes are now considered unlikely to burn at
374 high intensity. We must remain on course and build on these
375 gains.

376 We recognize the urgency of investing in a permanent and
377 a comprehensive pay increase to provide a more livable wage,
378 enhance recruitment, and stabilize retention. We must also
379 improve housing conditions and provide better care for our
380 firefighters' physical and mental health. We look forward to
381 seeing an end to reports of firefighters living in cars with
382 few benefits and limited mental health care.

383 In addition to work to address the wildfire crisis and
384 firefighters, we continue to take action that supports access
385 and benefits from forests. Visitor use, hunting and fishing,
386 energy and minerals development, forest products, and
387 livestock grazing generate 69 percent of the contributions to
388 the economy.

389 Thanks to the Great American Outdoors Act funds, we
390 relieved some of the pressures from the \$8.6 billion of
391 backlog that we have. The budget requests 58 million to
392 maintain critical recreation services, with a focus on
393 offering welcoming and equitable opportunities.

394 We are also making a difference in our urban

395 environments. The Forest Service and partners are planting
396 and maintaining trees in cities and areas where 84 percent of
397 Americans live. Trees combat extreme heat and climate
398 change, and they also improve access to nature.

399 The 2025 budget returns basic funding to most programs.
400 This includes forest products, which are vital to sustaining
401 rural communities. This includes sustainable timber supply.
402 We know it is a critical component and is part of a complex,
403 market-driven system. And while we don't control markets, we
404 can support industry through forest products and wood
405 innovations which help mills adapt and modernize. And while
406 the current industry adapts, the agency has taken strides to
407 support the existing industry by investing nearly \$80 million
408 over the last three years by directly supporting sawmills and
409 other forest products manufacturing facilities.

410 We have also expanded the wood -- for mills through the
411 build and timber transport program, and authorized extensions
412 to timber sale contracts to provide relief from the decline
413 in the demand for paper products.

414 So in closing, we are fully committed to meeting the
415 challenges before us with the resources Congress provided.
416 The people of America deserves nothing less than to see their
417 money put to work to benefit all. Thank you, and I welcome
418 your comments.

419

420 [The prepared statement of Mr. Moore follows:]

421

422 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

423

424 *Mr. Tiffany. Yes, thank you, Chief Moore, for your
425 testimony. We really appreciate that you are here today.
426 And I will recognize members for five minutes.

427 We are going to take a couple rounds of questioning here
428 before we break for votes. I recognize the gentleman from
429 Minnesota for five minutes.

430 *Mr. Stauber. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

431 Chief Moore, thank you once again for coming before the
432 Subcommittee.

433 Despite dramatic budget increases in Fiscal Year 2022
434 and 2023, we are seeing reduced access to outdoor recreation
435 and diminished public benefits across the National Forest
436 System. This has been evident in the Superior National
437 Forest in northern Minnesota, for example.

438 In the Boundary Waters Canoe Area a "temporary cap on
439 backcountry permits," equal to 80 percent of their previous
440 cap, was put in place in response to increased demand and use
441 during the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time campsites in
442 the BWCA were also closed, but many of those campsites still
443 have not reopened today. Clearly, these caps are not
444 temporary.

445 What progress has the Forest Service made in reopening
446 our national forests and ensuring we return to pre-pandemic
447 levels of access?

448 *Mr. Moore. Yes, thank you for that question,

449 Congressman.

450 So we are currently working with the local community to
451 do just what you described. To date we have not made a lot
452 of progress, but I would be willing to get back with you by
453 the week's end to give you more specifics on what we have
454 been able to do within the community.

455 *Mr. Stauber. Thank you. The Service is largely
456 reliant on a Ticketmaster-style online permit registration
457 system involving a mad dash to compete for a limited number
458 of permits when they are released. And often times people
459 buy up large blocks of permits that often go unused. And I
460 recognize this isn't just an issue for the BWCA or the
461 Superior National Forest or the Forest Service.

462 That said, what specifically is the Forest Service doing
463 to address this?

464 *Mr. Moore. So first of all, we want to be able to
465 really understand what is going on. And, you know, we are
466 trying to be responsive to what people are choosing to do by
467 buying up blocks. And so we are looking into it to see what
468 opportunities we have to limit what we see happening across
469 the -- that whole system. And to date I don't have any news
470 to report to you in terms of the progress --

471 *Mr. Stauber. Chief --

472 *Mr. Moore. -- that we have made on that.

473 *Mr. Stauber. Chief, are you looking at -- to limit the

474 big blocks of buying the permits for entry? Is that what you
475 just said?

476 *Mr. Moore. We are going to be looking at all of it --

477 *Mr. Stauber. Okay.

478 *Mr. Moore. -- including the big blocks.

479 *Mr. Stauber. Well, let me ask you this. Would
480 increasing the number of available permits and returning to
481 pre-pandemic levels of access help alleviate this issue or
482 make it worse?

483 *Mr. Moore. Yes, I think it would, Congressman.

484 *Mr. Stauber. Changing gears a bit, would you consider
485 timber harvesting to be an important tool for the Forest
486 Service to protect against wildfire risk?

487 *Mr. Moore. Yes, timber is a necessary tool.

488 *Mr. Stauber. In Fiscal Year 2024 the Forest Service
489 missed its timber harvesting target by approximately 260
490 million board feet. That includes missing the mark on
491 forests like the Chippewa and Superior National Forests. You
492 missed your 3.4 billion board feet goal by over 7.5 percent,
493 almost 8 percent. So how does missing this timber harvesting
494 goal affect the forest system's wildfire risk?

495 *Mr. Moore. Yes, Congressman, one of the challenges we
496 have is litigation. And if you look at the amount of
497 litigation we have with -- we would have exceeded our timber
498 targets. We have no control over that part of it. We just

499 have to deal with it.

500 And so our plans was to meet or exceed our targets. We
501 would have done that, but for the litigation that we are
502 currently under.

503 *Mr. Stauber. The weaponizing of the court system is
504 what you are saying?

505 *Mr. Moore. I am saying that we would have met our
506 targets, but for litigation.

507 *Mr. Stauber. The Service has lowered its timber
508 harvesting goal from 3.4 billion board feet to 3.2 billion
509 board feet for the next two years. If the Forest Service is
510 aiming to harvest 200 million less board feet of timber over
511 the next year, how do you plan to address this delta in terms
512 of the wildfire risk?

513 *Mr. Moore. Well, actually, for the last 20 years our
514 timber harvesting has gone up. In fact, if I look at the
515 last 20 years, we have increased our timber harvesting by
516 roughly 30 percent. So I am not really sure about the
517 numbers that, you know, that you are spouting, but I would be
518 happy to meet with you separately to look at the numbers that
519 you have, and where you got those numbers from, and compare
520 to what we are showing in our books.

521 *Mr. Stauber. We got them from the professionals in the
522 Forest Service.

523 And thanks in large part to the decreased availability

524 of timber from Federal lands, mills across this country are
525 closing, including several in my district, that have led to
526 layoffs for hundreds of employees.

527 And given that many of our national forests are working
528 industrial forests, does the Forest Service take into
529 consideration lost economic activity when it makes decisions
530 that limit responsible industrial use of our forests?

531 *Mr. Moore. Yes, Congressman. I mean, any time a mill
532 closes, it hurts us, as well. And many of our employees have
533 grown up and lived in those same communities.

534 *Mr. Stauber. And I have one second left. I will -- I
535 appreciate, Chief Moore, that you said in your comments that
536 you are looking at national forests to produce energy and
537 mineral development. You know in the Superior National
538 Forest it is a working industrial forest where mining and
539 timber harvesting are a desired condition. And we want to
540 keep that just as it is. Thank you very much.

541 And I yield back, Mr. Chair.

542 *Mr. Tiffany. Yes, I just add to the gentleman from
543 Minnesota we have talked to the Chief offline here. We want
544 to see those numbers where they are saying that those harvest
545 levels have actually gone up. We want to look at them in the
546 long term as well as the short term. And we will be working
547 with members of the Committee and with the Chief to compare
548 those numbers and see where the difference of -- the

549 differences lie.

550 *Mr. Stauber. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

551 *Mr. Tiffany. Now I would like to recognize the Ranking
552 Member today, Ms. Kamlager-Dove, for five minutes for her
553 questioning.

554 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

555 And thank you, Chief Moore, for your testimony. I just
556 want to add that a Fiscal Year 2022 economic analysis found,
557 actually, that the U.S. fire service programs contributed
558 \$44.3 billion in gross domestic product and contributed
559 410,000 jobs. I think that is a very strong return on
560 investment for the appropriations that you all have received.

561 So can you share how the Forest Service is addressing
562 the most critical landscapes through the 10-year Wildfire
563 Crisis Strategy and the funding provided from the Bipartisan
564 Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act?

565 *Mr. Moore. Yes, I would be happy to.

566 So the Wildfire Crisis Strategy involves and includes
567 about 21 different landscapes across the West primarily. In
568 that 21 landscapes we have identified 550 communities within
569 it, 2,500 miles of utility corridor lines. And we also have
570 about 1,800 municipal or priority watersheds that serves as
571 drinking water for 12 million people.

572 So in that we are looking at the type of investment that
573 we are making in those landscapes that are so important to

574 the American people. And to date, just in the last year-and-
575 a-half to two years of implementation of the Wildfire Crisis
576 Strategy, we reduced the risk to homes by eight percent. We
577 reduced the risk to utility corridors and that critical
578 infrastructure about another eight percent. And then, on
579 those watersheds that are so important, we reduced the risk
580 there about 12 percent.

581 And so you may say, well, what does all of this mean?
582 And what it really means in other terms is that we reduced
583 the risk to about \$300 million worth of homes. And we have
584 also reduced the risk to drinking water that serves 12
585 million people. This is only after the first year-and-a-half
586 of implementation of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. And we
587 feel that, with sustained investment, you will continue to
588 see that investment improve \$700 billion worth of values just
589 within those 21 landscapes.

590 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Great. So has funding been
591 dispersed to all 21 landscapes, including identified
592 landscapes in Southern California?

593 *Mr. Moore. Yes. Southern California is one of the
594 landscapes. We also have some in Northern California, and we
595 have them across the West primarily, and we have about \$1.8
596 billion that have been identified to work on that. And we
597 have treated approximately one million acres within the 21
598 landscapes so far.

599 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Great. And so what will happen to
600 your progress treating critical landscapes when the funding
601 runs out?

602 *Mr. Moore. Well, it is -- I mean, I would like to ask
603 Congress, you know, what happens if it runs out, because all
604 of the progress that we are building and creating would be at
605 risk or at jeopardy.

606 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Okay.

607 *Mr. Moore. Because once we create these conditions,
608 what we don't talk about quite often is maintaining those
609 conditions that we have invested in creating.

610 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Yes.

611 *Mr. Moore. And it is very critical.

612 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Thank you. So there have been
613 some, you know, narratives out there that conservation and
614 climate resilience is a misplaced priority. But the reality
615 is that the investments made possible from those funding
616 bills have allowed the Biden Administration to support
617 sustainable management and restoration where there is an
618 important need to reduce wildfire fire risk or to restore
619 ecosystem integrity. Do you want to add to that?

620 *Mr. Moore. Yes. You know, I can't underscore the
621 value that both BIL and IRA legislation has provided the
622 Forest Service in creating and really getting at what we
623 consider the biggest challenge to our forest, which is

624 wildfire, disease, and insects. And there is a lot of
625 reasons for that, but it is something that we continue to
626 fall behind because we have not had the resources to address
627 the issues.

628 One example is when we look at the deferred maintenance
629 that we have across the agency, it was at \$8.6 billion. With
630 GAOA, it has given us an opportunity to start looking at some
631 of that backlog that we have. And when you look at some of
632 the biggest challenges within that, roads, dams, and bridges
633 creates about \$5.4 billion of that \$8 billion of backlog.

634 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Thank you. There is also this
635 narrative that you all have still failed to meaningfully ramp
636 up the number of acres treated. But you have said before
637 that the performance is restricted by budget decreases and
638 hazardous fuels reduction, and across-the-board increases of
639 operational costs. In my last few seconds, do you want to
640 add to that?

641 *Mr. Moore. Yes, I think one of the really strategic
642 questions, I think, for this Committee and for us as well has
643 to do with how do we report -- or what are our performance
644 metrics? Because the way that we have reported over the last
645 100 years, we need to diversify how and what we report if we
646 are going to move into this future that is here.

647 And what I mean by that is not just outputs, but
648 outcomes of the work that we are doing on the landscapes

649 because of the values that it benefits and protects.

650 *Ms. Kamlager-Dove. Thank you, I yield back.

651 *Mr. Tiffany. The gentlelady yields. I now recognize
652 the gentleman from Idaho, Mr. Fulcher.

653 *Mr. Fulcher. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and, Chief Moore,
654 it is a pleasure to see you again. Thank you for being here
655 and for your work. We are clearly here to talk about the
656 proposed budget.

657 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

658 *Mr. Fulcher. But that is directly impacted by the use
659 of resources that your department impacts. And so I am going
660 to kind of follow a line of discussion in that vein if okay
661 with you.

662 And you are familiar with my State, we have had
663 conversations before. We have got about 34 million acres in
664 Idaho that is managed by the Federal Government. And so the
665 timber industry is a huge part of that, and a major industry
666 and a major concern for us.

667 And Chairmen Westerman and Tiffany also talked about the
668 potential -- the closures of mills and whatnot that is having
669 an impact on all of us. We are not immune from that. In
670 fact, just within the last few days a major mill, Stimson
671 Lumber Company in Idaho, just announced that they will be
672 closing. And I am going to quote the CEO, a part of his
673 statement here. According to the CEO, "Over time, the supply

674 of the size of timber processes has declined, and so we have
675 had to reduce our production.'`

676 And if I recall correctly, you have talked in the past,
677 previous testimony about the need for low-value materials and
678 markets for those materials. And so I just want to open this
679 up and get your feedback.

680 You know, to me, it is -- to me it is pretty clear that
681 we have got an issue of access to supply. That is one
682 component. We have the issue of the processing or the mills.
683 And then we have the issue of the markets. And if our
684 numbers are correct Chief Moore, about a third -- a little
685 less than that, 30 percent of the U.S. supply of lumber, of
686 wood products comes from outside of the U.S., with Canada and
687 China being at the top of those import nations.

688 So from my vantage point, it is not a market issue that
689 we have. It is a access to resource issue that we have.
690 There is not a shortage of timber in Idaho. There is not a
691 shortage of timber in the U.S. But there is -- appears to be
692 very significant constraints, and those constraints are
693 shutting our mills down.

694 I just want to open that up, and I want to -- that is my
695 monologue.

696 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

697 *Mr. Fulcher. But I would like to get your commentary,
698 as well.

699 *Mr. Moore. Yes. Thank you, Congressman. You know,
700 this issue that you raise, I mean, we could be -- and you are
701 correct in so many different ways. Some of these things that
702 you may not be aware of, though, is the market conditions,
703 because markets are playing a role in this.

704 And to give you an example, I look at just Idaho alone.
705 And in Idaho, as of May 4 this past month, we sold 137
706 million board feet there. Also, as of May 4 in Idaho, we
707 have about 580 million board feet of timber that has been
708 sold, but not yet cut. And so it is not cut because of
709 market conditions, and it is playing a significant role in --

710 *Mr. Fulcher. But Chief, if I could just interject for
711 a second, how is Canada and China able to come into our
712 country -- maybe not Idaho specific, but into our country --
713 and compete, if that is true?

714 *Mr. Moore. Well, it is true. And I -- you know, I
715 can't tell you -- I mean, we -- you know, we do business with
716 a lot of countries, but I am only giving you the data that I
717 have. And I am saying, if I had to look nationally at that
718 same number, Congressmen, we have eight billion board feet
719 that have been sold that is not cut.

720 And so there is a lot going on that is not being
721 discussed or talked about, and I think that we need to be
722 really transparent in what is really going on across the
723 country. Because what you are saying is correct, but also

724 what I am saying is correct. And so there are conditions
725 that we are not talking about that also have a significant
726 role in what is going on across our --

727 *Mr. Fulcher. I just -- I know we are out of time, but
728 I really, sincerely want to connect with you and have further
729 conversations, because if there is a scenario where any other
730 country with a product, with the amount of freight involved
731 and processing and whatnot --

732 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

733 *Mr. Fulcher. -- that can ship to our country and
734 outcompete our domestic sourcing, there is something that has
735 got to be looked at that is just not right, because I -- and
736 it is -- it needs attention. And unfortunately, I think it
737 needs congressional intervention.

738 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

739 *Mr. Fulcher. I am out of time. I thank you for your
740 exchange, and I sincerely want to continue this beyond this
741 discussion.

742 Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

743 *Mr. Moore. I would love to, by the way.

744 *Mr. Fulcher. Thank you.

745 *Mr. Tiffany. Yes, the gentleman yields. And as I
746 stated previously -- and I am sure the gentleman from Idaho
747 heard that -- we are going to be engaging with the Chief
748 offline here, and you are sure welcome to join us in regards

749 to that. We want to see the numbers that they are producing,
750 and as well as the other numbers that are being produced by
751 other folks who follow this very closely.

752 Chief, I hope you can take a little break here, because
753 we do have to cast a couple votes. We will be back here as
754 promptly as possible.

755 The Committee stands in recess.

756 [Recess.]

757 *Mr. Tiffany. The Committee will be in order.

758 I would now like to recognize the gentleman from
759 Colorado for five minutes of questioning.

760 *Mr. Lamborn. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

761 Chief Moore, last year I asked you questions regarding
762 wildfire, specifically on thinning and fuels management. You
763 concurred that healthy forests should have between 50 to 80
764 trees per acre, as opposed to 250 to 300 that national
765 forests near my district have. As I said last time, in the
766 fall of 2020 Colorado saw the two largest wildfires in State
767 history: the Cameron Peak Fire and the East Troublesome
768 Fire. Most of these happened on Federal land.

769 Despite robust funding, fuel material continues to pile
770 up on Federal lands. In fact, the Fiscal Year 2025
771 presidential budget request asks for more money while
772 targeting 200,000 less acres than last year. Has there been
773 any change since we spoke on the Forest Service's position on

774 tree thinning and fuels management?

775 *Mr. Moore. Yes, we are constantly looking at fuels
776 management. And in Colorado, particularly along the Front
777 Range, that is one of our priority landscapes. And so we
778 have ramped up treatments in the Front Range landscapes, and
779 so we are making, actually, a lot of progress there,
780 Congressman, in terms of what we are able to do in terms of
781 treatments on those landscapes.

782 *Mr. Lamborn. Okay, very good. Also, the last time
783 that you were in front of this Committee you resisted the
784 Forest Service using fuel-related categorical exclusions, and
785 that is why I introduced the Locally-Led Restoration Act to
786 provide flexibility in stewardship contracts while focusing
787 on wildlife mitigation through fuel removal.

788 So my question is -- you mentioned collaborating with
789 community leaders. Please share what conversations, if any,
790 you have had regarding stewardship and timber contracts with
791 industry.

792 *Mr. Moore. Yes, so we have had a number of memoranda
793 of understandings and agreements with some of the industry
794 folks.

795 One of the latest ones we have had was with NAFO, the
796 National Association of Forest Owners, and two of the
797 contracts there had to do with -- one is that, for the timber
798 owners or the landowners, we have agreed to allow them to

799 jump on a fire if it is in their area during an initial
800 attack. So that has been in place for a year now. And we
801 went back and did an after-action review this past winter to
802 look to see if there was any value to that, and we found out,
803 with the timber and forest owners, that there was value. In
804 fact, we saw a couple of fires that they were able to get to
805 that could have grown into larger fires.

806 The other piece that we -- other agreement that we have
807 with the industry is to look at opportunities after a fire
808 for reforestation. And so we entered into an agreement,
809 actually, with Sierra Forest Industries. And in that
810 agreement they have reforested some of the national forest-
811 managed land as they were doing theirs. And I think we had
812 about 120 acres this past year on that.

813 And so we are looking at a lot of different
814 opportunities that partner with industry and other community
815 leaders to look at bringing them into the decision space on
816 what we do out there.

817 *Mr. Lamborn. Okay, that is -- and that is good to see
818 that progress being made.

819 What this bill would do I just mentioned is, instead of
820 all-or-nothing contracts, it lets there be a counteroffer,
821 which is prevalent in the private sector but for some reason
822 doesn't exist with Forest Service. So I would love to see
823 that legislation go forward, give you that authorization as

824 another tool in the toolkit and another way for industry to
825 be --

826 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

827 *Mr. Lamborn. -- relevant in this space.

828 I have also proposed using private sectors in the --
829 whatever areas I can in all kinds of government service
830 areas. There is a shortage of lumber and wood products
831 during the pandemic, for instance, yet timber harvests have
832 dropped since the early 1990s and wildfires have continued to
833 skyrocket.

834 The U.S. produced 112 million board feet in 1987, but in
835 2022 less than five million board feet. So production has
836 gone down while wildfires have gone up. You mentioned the
837 problems with litigation. Are there other things that could
838 be done to restore some balance here?

839 You know, no one is talking about clear cutting millions
840 of acres, but having some kind of balance with American jobs
841 and products so we don't have to import so much from other
842 countries.

843 *Mr. Moore. Yes, Congressman, I have committed earlier
844 with Chairman Tiffany to really take a look at our data
845 because the information that you just shared, I have
846 different information that says the opposite.

847 And I think, you know, you can sometimes have a seesaw
848 effect from year to year about what timber is, but my data is

849 telling me that we have seen slight increases over the last
850 20 years -- actually, to the tune of about 30 percent. And
851 so I would like to be able to sit down, and I have agreed
852 already to sit down with Committee members here to go into a
853 bit more detail on sharing that information.

854 *Mr. Lamborn. Okay. Thank you.

855 I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

856 *Mr. Tiffany. The gentleman yields. I would now like
857 to recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. McClintock,
858 for his five minutes of questioning.

859 *Mr. McClintock. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

860 And welcome, Chief Moore. I am having nostalgic
861 feelings for our meetings over the last 16 years, and I am
862 very pleased to welcome you as the Chief of the Forest
863 Service here today.

864 A lot has happened in those 16 years, and it is
865 heartbreaking. I am sure you have had the same experience.
866 In my drives through the Sierra Nevada, whether it is to
867 Yosemite or Lake Tahoe, Sequoia-Kings Canyon, drives up to
868 the Oregon border, beautiful forests that we used to take for
869 granted are now simply gone. They have been reduced to scrub
870 brush and dead tree trunks as far as the eye can see.

871 I asked my staff to look into that because -- is this an
872 optical illusion, or -- what do the statistics say? And
873 their estimate is that about 25 percent of our national

874 forests have burned down in the last ten years. Does that
875 comport with your general figures?

876 *Mr. Moore. Yes, I don't have the specific number, but
877 I wouldn't argue with that number, Congressman.

878 *Mr. McClintock. A quarter --

879 *Mr. Moore. A lot has burned.

880 *Mr. McClintock. A quarter of our national forests
881 gone, simply gone. Now, I am sure they will grow back in a
882 century or two, but they are gone for the -- for all of us
883 for the rest of our lifetimes, and for our children's
884 lifetimes.

885 The Forest Service was supposed to protect our forests,
886 and for generations they did.

887 [Chart]

888 *Mr. McClintock. And getting to Mr. Lamborn's point, I
889 asked our staff to chart the board feet harvested out of the
890 Federal forests and the acreage burned in our Federal
891 forests. These -- and this goes back to 1962 to 2022. You
892 see the blue bars here? That is board feet harvested out of
893 the national forests. The orange bars, that is acreage
894 burned. And there is nothing subtle about this trend. It is
895 dramatic.

896 And you are right, it may vary from year to year, but
897 you take a look at what has happened. As the Federal timber
898 harvest has dropped precipitously, acreage burned has grown

899 precipitously.

900 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

901 *Mr. McClintock. And we agree that about a quarter of
902 those forests have now been destroyed by these policies.

903 You and I both know that excess timber is going to come
904 out of that forest in only one of two ways. Either we are
905 going to carry it out or it is going to burn out. What do
906 these charts tell you?

907 *Mr. Moore. Well, they don't tell me anything different
908 than what they are telling you. I mean, I don't think it is
909 a big secret we are not managing to the degree that our
910 forest needs.

911 We also don't have --

912 *Mr. McClintock. And why aren't we? Because this is
913 one of the great ironies. You look at the private
914 landowners. In California about half of the forests are
915 privately owned. They are kept in excellent condition, and
916 the landowners make a lot of money doing that. The Federal
917 forests are absolutely decrepit. Again, one quarter of them
918 destroyed. And yet we lose money. What is the difference?

919 *Mr. Moore. So the difference -- and you may or may not
920 care to hear this, but the difference is we don't have the
921 resources to manage the forest to the degree that they need
922 to be managed.

923 *Mr. McClintock. Well, we used to, and we used to do it

924 for a lot less. We used to make money harvesting this excess
925 timber out of the forest. Now it costs us money.

926 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

927 *Mr. McClintock. Not because of a lack of resources,
928 but because the laws that have been adopted in the 1970s make
929 it cost prohibitive for us to continue those sound forest
930 management practices. So not a lot gets done. And until you
931 can acknowledge that, we are going to continue to have these
932 discussions and these disagreements, and we are going to
933 continue to watch our Federal forests die out and be burned
934 out.

935 I do want to compliment you on the -- on your
936 administration of the of the WIIN Act of 2016 that got a
937 categorical exclusion from NEPA for forest thinning projects
938 under 10,000 acres. That was administered in the Tahoe Basin
939 under your leadership, and I believe that that was exemplary.
940 I have been trying to get legislation to the floor that will
941 extend those policies nationally. Would that help or hurt
942 the cause of the forests?

943 *Mr. Moore. Yes, you know, Congresswoman McClintock,
944 you and I go back quite a ways. And one of the benefits that
945 we have gotten from some of your legislation was the 5,000-
946 acre CE there on the Tahoe area. And that was very
947 beneficial in actually creating and supporting an industry
948 that was nearby.

949 So there are opportunities to --

950 *Mr. McClintock. I think it actually saved the City of
951 South Lake Tahoe from the Caldor Fire. It hit a treated
952 tract under that authority. The fire laid down, and
953 firefighters were able to put it out. But I am having a hell
954 of a time getting that onto the House floor for a vote,
955 despite the fact it came out of this Committee with a
956 somewhat bipartisan vote. And with your experience with
957 these policies, I would hope that we can get that into law,
958 but we have got to overcome a problem here in this House.

959 But thank you for being here today. Thank you for your
960 work all these years.

961 *Mr. Tiffany. The gentleman yields. I now recognize
962 the gentlelady from New Mexico for five minutes of
963 questioning.

964 *Ms. Stansbury. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

965 Chief Moore, thank you so much for being here with us
966 today. I am Melanie Stansbury. I represent New Mexico's 1st
967 congressional district, which includes the Albuquerque area
968 and ten counties in central New Mexico.

969 And I want to start by, first of all, saying thank you.
970 We had a fairly large wildfire break out in Lincoln County on
971 the southern tip of my district just two weeks ago.

972 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

973 *Ms. Stansbury. And your incident command and all of

974 the Forest Service guys who are out on the ground have done
975 just an exemplary job, and I wanted to commend them and thank
976 them for all of their work. You know, the early days of that
977 fire were a -- there was some communication challenges with
978 some of the local residents, but your incident command got
979 there, and they now have it almost completely contained,
980 folks are back in their homes. So I just want to say thank
981 you.

982 Often times the Forest Service doesn't get their flowers
983 for the good work that they do, so we really appreciate it.
984 And I also want to say thank you to all the hotshot crews and
985 firefighters who are out there on the ground.

986 You know, I am sure a lot of this has been covered this
987 morning, but obviously we are seeing a huge increase in both
988 the number of fires and intensity of fires. And in New
989 Mexico this is certainly the case across the State. And the
990 wildfire season is shifting dramatically earlier. I mean, we
991 are already having fires across the State, and it is only
992 May. And so the questions I wanted to ask today are really
993 about community collaborations with the Forest Service and
994 resources that are available. And so I want to kind of ask
995 them in two tranches.

996 One is about resources that are available to help
997 communities that want to engage in forest thinning and
998 treatments to help prevent fires, as well as some of the

999 challenges we are seeing working with utilities, especially
1000 with climate change and --

1001 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

1002 *Ms. Stansbury. -- how it is changing mitigation
1003 activities.

1004 So if we could, if we could start talking about
1005 utilities, you know, one of the challenges that we are seeing
1006 in New Mexico is that the current guidance, both from Forest
1007 Service and just the way in which utilities have managed
1008 their power lines -- and I know this is true in California,
1009 as well -- is that they had certain easements and cutbacks in
1010 terms of how close the forest was allowed to grow to the
1011 power lines. And just -- I believe it was three years ago we
1012 had the McBride Fire in Lincoln County, where we had 90-mile-
1013 an-hour winds, and we had a sapling that crossed with a power
1014 line, and basically ignited a massive fire. And the
1015 utilities were in the correct cutback zone, but with that
1016 kind of wind intensity it still happened.

1017 And so one of the things we are hearing -- and I know
1018 this is a problem across the West -- is that utilities just
1019 don't have the resources. And Forest Service, of course, is
1020 also strapped in terms of manpower to get those mitigation
1021 easements cleaned up. So talk to us about what resources are
1022 available. In my personal opinion it is not acceptable to
1023 cut power to communities for days at a time.

1024 *Mr. Moore. Right.

1025 *Ms. Stansbury. And absent resources, that is what our
1026 utilities are talking about doing. So what is available?
1027 How do we deal with this problem?

1028 *Mr. Moore. So first of all, thank you for that
1029 question, because we have been actively engaged with the
1030 utility industry over the course of the last couple of years
1031 because we know that that is a real critical area in the
1032 contributions to fire or mitigation from fire.

1033 So some of the things that we have done -- and we
1034 started this in California, where we have streamlined our
1035 processes so that utility companies don't have to come and,
1036 you know, get permission every time they do routine
1037 maintenance under their power lines. And so we have been
1038 doing that across the country over the last couple of years,
1039 trying to see where and how we can streamline processes so
1040 that we are not a limiting factor for treating underneath
1041 those power lines.

1042 The other issue, which we don't talk about too, though,
1043 is the whole issue around liability. And it is something
1044 that is there. We are going to have to have those tough
1045 conversations around it. And there are no solutions right
1046 now, but that is one of the biggest challenges that I see,
1047 particularly for the small, rural cooperatives. They just
1048 don't have the ability when fires strike.

1049 And so it is a critical area for us. We have to look at
1050 that because, just like you, I don't see no scenario where we
1051 are not going to provide electricity to a lot of our rural
1052 users.

1053 *Ms. Stansbury. Yes. And, you know, at the end of the
1054 day, it is not just a climate mitigation issue and a public
1055 safety issue. I mean, this is people's lives on the line.
1056 You know, we are talking about in Lincoln County, for
1057 example, if they cut power to a community like Ruidoso, we
1058 are talking hospitals, clinics. I mean, this is going to
1059 actually impact real lives and the local economy in this
1060 rural area.

1061 The other piece I get asked all the time -- we have 23
1062 tribal nations in New Mexico. They absolutely would like to
1063 partner with the Forest Service to do forest treatments, but
1064 are struggling to identify where the money is, how to engage
1065 in those conversations. What part of the Forest Service is
1066 the best point of contact to understand how to access these
1067 infrastructure and IRA monies and those co-stewardship
1068 agreements?

1069 *Mr. Moore. Well, typically, depending on the location,
1070 they should be contacting the forest supervisor. And if that
1071 forest supervisor is not available, I mean, the regional
1072 forester.

1073 But you know, my office, if you just can't get any help

1074 -- and for someone like you, if you contact me or my office,
1075 that is another way to get that pushed down.

1076 But normally, if everything was working as it should be,
1077 then our Tribes should be working with the forest supervisor.

1078 *Ms. Stansbury. Excellent. You know, maybe a follow-up
1079 on this -- and we would love to engage with you all on this -
1080 - is to ask your forest supervisors at large to do more
1081 proactive engagement with our Tribes and consultation on
1082 funding resources available.

1083 *Mr. Moore. Yes, Congresswoman, you -- I don't know if
1084 you aware, but we have developed a whole Tribal Action Plan,
1085 and a part of that plan is to educate the entire workforce on
1086 tribal issues. And so we have moved to make great strides in
1087 that area. In fact, we have changed our State and Private
1088 Forestry name to State, Private and Tribal. And so we are
1089 making tremendous amount of strides in trying to improve the
1090 relationships with a lot of our tribal communities.

1091 *Ms. Stansbury. Excellent. Well, I think at the end of
1092 the day, it really comes down --

1093 *Mr. Tiffany. The gentlelady's time has expired.

1094 *Ms. Stansbury. Oh, just -- I am just going to wrap up
1095 my sentence.

1096 We would love to engage with you on that issue. It is
1097 really important to our tribal nations.

1098 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

1099 *Mr. Tiffany. You are welcome for the extra time.

1100 I would like to recognize the gentleman from Oregon for
1101 five minutes.

1102 *Mr. Bentz. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1103 And thank you, Chief, for being here today. And I also
1104 want to thank you for the prompt response to my concern
1105 raised at our last meeting regarding the tribal stewardship
1106 contracts out in Oregon. And there was a prompt reaching
1107 out, and we very much appreciate that.

1108 Also, I want to give a shout out to Merv George for his
1109 work. It has been excellent, and we are very appreciative of
1110 his work and yours in putting together the memorandum of
1111 understanding on allowing private parties to suppress fires
1112 on Federal land in Oregon. That is hugely important, given
1113 the checkerboard nature of which you are all too familiar
1114 with --

1115 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

1116 *Mr. Bentz. -- of that land. And so perhaps a comment
1117 of why you supported the MOU that allows private parties to
1118 go on Federal land and put out fires.

1119 *Mr. Moore. So one of the things that we want to do is
1120 bring the community into the decision space on some of the
1121 things is taking place. No one cares about the community
1122 better than the people that live in those communities, and so
1123 bringing them to the table and not just to get their opinion,

1124 but also giving them decision space, it is the right thing to
1125 do, and it is the necessary thing to do.

1126 And what we are finding, by bringing the community into
1127 discussion, is that we are getting better-supported
1128 solutions. And that is one of the solutions. You may or may
1129 not be familiar with what just happened yesterday in the Bend
1130 area, having a tentative agreement on the homeless issue
1131 there. And so I would say that, you know, just having a lot
1132 of different entities engaged in solutions and discovering
1133 solutions has been a -- really, a win-win for everyone.

1134 *Mr. Bentz. Well, we hope for that outcome in and
1135 around Bend, for sure. It has been a long time coming. But
1136 yay.

1137 Let's talk about the amount that people are being paid
1138 right now to fight fires. And one of the situations that has
1139 occurred is that the people actually that are contracting
1140 have had pay increases imposed upon them for \$10 an hour, I
1141 think, for those that are out fighting fire. But that \$10
1142 did not extend to the folks who had been there longer. And
1143 as a result, what we have are people at the lower end of the
1144 pay scale getting a \$10-an-hour increase, but people at the
1145 higher level, no. And that is creating incredible
1146 difficulties.

1147 Now, my understanding is that you folks have been
1148 working on this, but there has been no resolution. Can you

1149 bring us up to date on --

1150 *Mr. Moore. So --

1151 *Mr. Bentz. -- on how this is --

1152 *Mr. Moore. Are you talking about the pay bump that the
1153 firefighters got?

1154 *Mr. Bentz. Yes.

1155 *Mr. Moore. So there was actually a \$20,000 pay bump
1156 for GS-10s and below. And a part of that was to get at the
1157 issue around retention that we were having across the agency.
1158 And the other thing is that we had to do this because, you
1159 know, you could work at a fast food restaurant and make more
1160 than a number of our firefighters were making --

1161 *Mr. Bentz. Right, so I don't think I am talking about
1162 Federal employees. I think I am talking about contract
1163 employees that are working for people who are contracting to
1164 do firefighting.

1165 *Mr. Moore. Yes, I am not familiar with that. I know
1166 we are required on the Davis-Bacon Act to pay appropriate
1167 wages. So you know, I would be happy to follow up with you
1168 to --

1169 *Mr. Bentz. Please.

1170 *Mr. Moore. -- get more specifics on that particular
1171 issue.

1172 *Mr. Bentz. If you would, we would very much appreciate
1173 that.

1174 *Mr. Moore. Okay.

1175 *Mr. Bentz. Also, there has been an issue raised that
1176 has to do with the nature of Forest Service contracting when
1177 it comes to going for the cheapest possible bid as opposed to
1178 the more quality, experienced, long-term contracts. And this
1179 is a decision made inside the Forest Service. And the result
1180 has been perhaps less money paid out, but perhaps not the
1181 quality of the project being done that all of us want. Can
1182 you talk about that for a moment?

1183 *Mr. Moore. Yes. You may be talking about, you know,
1184 getting the, I guess, the cheapest bid -- or the best value
1185 bid would be another way. And so we have been looking at
1186 exploring the best value-type contracts, because it gives a
1187 local contractor an opportunity to win a number of those
1188 contracts.

1189 And so here again, if I had specifics on specific
1190 contracts, I can give you a specific response or answer. And
1191 I would be happy to follow up with you.

1192 *Mr. Bentz. No, thank you for that, and we will get you
1193 those specific instances of where long-term folks who have
1194 been doing the job quite well suddenly are being outbid by
1195 people that come in from goodness knows where, and the job
1196 that gets done is not what you, I think, or I would want from
1197 a quality standpoint.

1198 My last question has to do with the success of the

1199 categorical exclusion as a device to get us into the woods.
1200 What is your comment? What is your thought? Should we be,
1201 as the congressman from California suggested, expanding upon
1202 the CEs?

1203 *Mr. Moore. Yes, you know, as a matter of fact, I have
1204 looked at the NEPA that we use across the country, and about
1205 87 percent of our NEPA is done through CEs, and that is about
1206 1,134 CEs that we have used, as opposed to about 150 EAs and
1207 about 7 EISs.

1208 *Mr. Bentz. Thank you so much.

1209 I yield back.

1210 *Mr. Tiffany. The gentleman yields. I would now like
1211 to recognize the gentlelady from New Mexico, Ms. Leger
1212 Fernandez.

1213 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. Thank you.

1214 *Mr. Tiffany. For five minutes.

1215 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. Thank you very much, and thank
1216 you, Chief Moore. We are -- we talk often.

1217 And I really want to thank you for advocating for
1218 comprehensive pay, the \$20,000 bump you just talked about for
1219 housing, because we need to make sure that our forest
1220 fighters or -- and the people who not just fight the forest,
1221 but who care for the forest have housing, addressing mental
1222 health, and the well-being of our Federal firefighters.
1223 Those of us who live among the forests and play among the

1224 forests know the hard work that they do and the sacrifices
1225 that they endure on behalf of the communities and those
1226 firefighters, and they are often from those communities, and
1227 so I think that that is really key.

1228 I also want to thank the heroic men and women who are
1229 presently fighting the Indios wildfire in my district. As
1230 you know, we have several wildfires going in New Mexico.

1231 And I was struck by the fact that in 2022 Congress
1232 appropriated \$10.8 billion to the Forest Service. Is that
1233 correct?

1234 *Mr. Moore. Through the BIL and IRA, you mean?

1235 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. Yes.

1236 *Mr. Moore. Yes, that is right.

1237 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. And then, according to your
1238 written testimony, that same year the Forest Service
1239 contributed 44.3 billion to our country's GDP. So we
1240 invested 10.8 billion in the Forest Service, we got 400
1241 percent back as a return on investment. And I think that
1242 that is really important for us to think about when we are
1243 thinking about these budgets, is that we are investing, that
1244 they are investments. They are not something that goes away,
1245 they are not frivolous. It is not waste. They are
1246 investments, and they are giving us a tremendous return.

1247 Now, when you are thinking about investments, though,
1248 because of Republican cuts you are operating on an \$8.2

1249 billion budget, and that is a 25 percent cut from 2022.

1250 Correct?

1251 *Mr. Moore. Right.

1252 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. And so I think we go back to we
1253 have got to invest in those places that protect us and those
1254 places that generate the kind of revenue we are talking
1255 about.

1256 But I want to go to something that is -- maybe might be
1257 seen by some as small, but by the communities that are
1258 infected, it is very -- impacted, very large, and that is
1259 cemeteries. It is my understanding that, if a cemetery is on
1260 Forest Service land and a community would like to have that
1261 cemetery returned to them, the Forest Service must go through
1262 an expensive process of evaluation: is there a reason for
1263 transferring it, is there authority, what is the dollar
1264 value? And there is a long, bureaucratic process for
1265 transferring back to a community a place where they have
1266 buried their ancestors, where you know you are not going to
1267 do anything else with that cemetery because it is hallowed
1268 ground. Is that right?

1269 *Mr. Moore. Yes, you know, that is something that we
1270 should really talk more about because you are right, we are
1271 not going to do any kind of management activities on those
1272 lands. And as you know, too, we are required to follow laws
1273 and procedures, but I would be willing -- and I think we

1274 would be willing to sit down and see what would be a
1275 wonderful solution to this issue that you are bringing up.

1276 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. Right. I think an amendment to
1277 the Small Tracts Act, and so we will look forward to working
1278 with you on that because I think anybody around this rotunda
1279 would recognize that that is something that we are going to
1280 need to transfer back to those people whose ancestors are
1281 there.

1282 You know, the other thing that, Chief Moore -- I think
1283 the first time you and I spoke was after the first fire that
1284 the Forest Service caused -- started in New Mexico that got
1285 out of control, and, you know, we then -- I know you did a
1286 review, but we also asked for a Government Accountability
1287 Office review, a GAO review. That is now coming to
1288 completion.

1289 And I while I welcome what you have done in yours, I
1290 think it was essential that we have that independent look
1291 that looked at all fires because we started with that one,
1292 and then we had a second one where you walked away from the
1293 campfire, as I call it. Nobody should walk away from the
1294 campfire. So you haven't seen the report yet, but I think
1295 you are going to want -- I am going to be asking you for a
1296 commitment to implement what the GAO has identified. Can you
1297 give me that commitment?

1298 *Mr. Moore. Yes. In fact, I would be really interested

1299 in seeing what GAO report has.

1300 As you may recall, right after that Hermits Peak Calf
1301 Canyon Fire, I called a 90-day pause on all prescribed burn
1302 across the agency. And in that process we looked at all of
1303 our prescribed burning, and we made some recommendations that
1304 we are living by today in that. So I --

1305 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. Well, we are not living by all of
1306 the recommendations, which is what some of the things that --
1307 you know, or not living by everything that you have committed
1308 to me. I mean, we need to really make sure that those -- the
1309 drones and the infrared technology is being deployed for
1310 prescribed burns. You know, there are some things that we
1311 need to get done. And your initial report following Hermits
1312 Peak --

1313 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

1314 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. -- there was a lot of issues, and
1315 so -- "Oh, but we did everything right," and it is like you
1316 had a whole list of issues that were done wrong. And so I
1317 think we need to be careful, because sometimes you have
1318 wanted to have it both ways. We are going to be doing this,
1319 but also then not truly, truly owning the mistakes that were
1320 made.

1321 So hopefully, the GAO report will give us new insight,
1322 and hopefully you will be willing to make sure they get
1323 implemented.

1324 *Mr. Moore. Yes, and I can give you an example of -- I
1325 know you are real big on the use of drones to monitor fires.
1326 And so we have committed to using drones for unnecessary and
1327 when necessary.

1328 The -- one of the challenges that we really have from
1329 drones is that we have a requirement that we cannot use
1330 drones with Chinese products in them. And so a drone without
1331 that, in many cases, it costs us \$80,000 for each one, as
1332 opposed to a much cheaper drone using other types. So we
1333 have to work that out from a budget standpoint, as well.

1334 But we are working on that. We are committed to it, and
1335 we know that the technology is rapidly changing every day.
1336 And so while we may not have that opportunity now, we think
1337 that in the future, because of the development of the
1338 technology, we would be able to use that going into the
1339 future.

1340 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. Right. Well, the Biden
1341 Administration has been real big on making sure that we bring
1342 manufacturing back home.

1343 But we have gone over our time. These New Mexican
1344 women, we just want to have long conversations, Mr. Chair.

1345 *Mr. Tiffany. No comment.

1346 [Laughter.]

1347 *Ms. Leger Fernandez. I yield back.

1348 *Mr. Tiffany. I would just gently chide my colleague

1349 from New Mexico in regards to the Republicans reducing
1350 funding in the latest appropriations bill for the U.S. Forest
1351 Service. Take a look at the number of people on the other
1352 side of the aisle that voted for that bill that reduces
1353 funding.

1354 I recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. LaMalfa,
1355 for five minutes.

1356 *Mr. LaMalfa. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate
1357 the opportunity.

1358 Thank you, Chief Moore, for appearing today. We go back
1359 a long ways, don't we?

1360 *Mr. Moore. We do.

1361 *Mr. LaMalfa. To the West. So let's talk about the
1362 harvest numbers for a moment here. I would like to
1363 understand better how you are arriving at a 30 percent
1364 increase over -- how many years was it, 20?

1365 *Mr. Moore. Yes, the last 20 years, yes.

1366 *Mr. LaMalfa. Because the chart I have, and the
1367 information and the trend seems to be over a much longer
1368 period of time where -- harvest being these olive-colored
1369 ones here going from -- this is still the late 1980s right
1370 here, you know -- 12 billion board feet down to the low of
1371 about 2002. So if you start at 2002 and trend up from there,
1372 you could see a slight increase, but a fairly flat one in
1373 board feet, but a dramatic drop-off from here. And then it

1374 is -- doggone it, it coincides with acres burned, vastly
1375 increasing at that point, too, as we have suffered so much in
1376 the West especially on that.

1377 And so I would like to understand how you are arriving
1378 at -- board feet harvested, is that the terminology you would
1379 like to use on that?

1380 *Mr. Moore. Sold, board feet sold.

1381 *Mr. LaMalfa. Sold, sold. So does that mean it is
1382 delivered?

1383 *Mr. Moore. That means it is sold. I will give you an
1384 example. You know, and we can break it down by each area.

1385 *Mr. LaMalfa. Well, I would like to just -- you know,
1386 time is short, and I am not going to get New Mexico time,
1387 probably. But board feet sold versus --

1388 *Mr. Moore. Yes, so --

1389 *Mr. LaMalfa. -- actually delivered. I want to know
1390 how many feet are coming out of the forest in marketable
1391 timber, lumber.

1392 *Mr. Moore. Well, that was it. I mean, our target this
1393 year is 3.2 billion board feet.

1394 *Mr. LaMalfa. Which is a lower number than last year,
1395 and yet there is projected to be a lower number for following
1396 years. But we had these huge numbers years ago.

1397 *Mr. Moore. Well, it is actually more than what we
1398 actually achieved last year.

1399 *Mr. LaMalfa. Achieved, yes, but you fell short of the
1400 goal by about a quarter billion board feet of last year's
1401 goal.

1402 *Mr. Moore. Yes, there is a lot that is not being
1403 brought up in this conversation, and so I --

1404 *Mr. LaMalfa. And it is tough, five minutes at a time
1405 here. But when you talk about litigation a bit earlier
1406 stopping you from hitting, you know, that goal by a quarter
1407 billion feet, why isn't your -- and just an idea, I am not
1408 trying to be mean here -- but why wouldn't you put out more
1409 bids, more -- open more bids so that you have more being
1410 litigated at the same time, and more of them actually fall
1411 through the hole and make it, and then reach the number?

1412 *Mr. Moore. Well, that would be an approach,
1413 Congressman, but that is not the one that we are choosing to
1414 do, simply because we don't have --

1415 *Mr. LaMalfa. Why don't you choose to do more? Because
1416 we are suffering out here.

1417 *Mr. Moore. We don't have the ability to do more than
1418 what we are currently doing --

1419 *Mr. LaMalfa. You just had a massive influx of money
1420 here from the IRA recently that -- they told us at a hearing
1421 in Spearfish, South Dakota, they said --

1422 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

1423 *Mr. LaMalfa. -- "We have more money right now than we

1424 have ever had.'`

1425 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

1426 *Mr. LaMalfa. Yet they still wanted 20 million more to
1427 help the -- do a project there that the Nyman Company needed.
1428 They have just laid off 50 workers there at their plant in
1429 Spearfish because they can't keep up. They can't get out in
1430 the forest enough to do -- they need about 120 million acre-
1431 feet -- water guy -- board feet to do the job. And as of
1432 March they only had ten million over the whole year. And so
1433 they have since subsequently laid off 50 people there. We
1434 have lost 50 mills in the last 18 months or 15 months or so.
1435 I don't know where the infrastructure is going to be to
1436 process what it is the output is.

1437 Let me ask a number from you here. So if we are putting
1438 out 3.1 to 3.4 billion, how many board feet are being grown
1439 in your forest in a year? How much are the trees just out
1440 there growing per year?

1441 *Mr. Moore. You know, I think -- so there is about
1442 three or four questions there, and so if --

1443 *Mr. LaMalfa. Well, just the one. How many board feet
1444 are you growing on your 193 million acres, do you think,
1445 annually?

1446 *Mr. Moore. Well, how I am going to answer you is that
1447 there is different ways to look at that. And I know some of
1448 the -- your friends in the industry is giving you a number.

1449 They are looking at --

1450 *Mr. LaMalfa. I don't have a number off the top of my
1451 head. No one has given me a number. I am asking you, sir.

1452 *Mr. Moore. Well, we are cutting below the ASQ, if I
1453 looked at all the plans across the country. And we are
1454 cutting that below ASQ because we don't have the resources to
1455 cut more than what we are currently cutting.

1456 *Mr. LaMalfa. So do you think we are growing about six
1457 billion board feet per year out in our forests, maybe?

1458 *Mr. Moore. I can't give you that with any confidence.

1459 *Mr. LaMalfa. It has got to be in that ballpark, five
1460 to six billion. Let's just go -- but we are cutting three,
1461 three-and-a-half as a goal. So over a period of time, how
1462 are we going to ever keep up with the amount of board feet
1463 that are growing and the density we are talking about?

1464 You know, Ms. Stansbury was talking about the power
1465 lines a little bit, and I hope people can support the farm
1466 bill because I have a piece in there to expand the gap
1467 between power lines and the forests from 10 feet to 50 feet,
1468 and we had to pass a law in 2018 to direct your agency to be
1469 more timely in getting permits out to take hazardous trees.

1470 And so we are trying to build upon that because, you
1471 know, ten feet is not a lot when the power line is shorter
1472 than the trees next to it. I would like it even wider than
1473 50, if you want to take it, because, as Ms. Stansbury said,

1474 we are shutting down people's power. Like in Tehama County,
1475 sometimes I drive through there in the past, and the whole
1476 county is shut off at night in Northern California because
1477 the wind might blow in this first-world country and cause a
1478 power line problem.

1479 So we need a lot better output on board feet taken
1480 because it is not keeping up. And I would certainly like to
1481 hear more about your numbers on how you come up with that
1482 trend over the 20, 30 years versus an actual decrease in what
1483 you are expecting to do the next two years with 200 million
1484 board feet.

1485 Let me close on the idea that your budget will be -- you
1486 are trying to free up 1.36 billion to take it into emergency
1487 spending, which means a lot more discretionary. Do you
1488 intend to purchase electric vehicles with this freed-up money
1489 that is going to be in your main budget now?

1490 *Mr. Moore. I don't know, but I wouldn't be surprised
1491 if we do purchase some electric vehicles.

1492 *Mr. LaMalfa. Will that be in the forest, or will they
1493 be running around in D.C. with those?

1494 *Mr. Moore. Congressman, I -- you know, I understand
1495 your position on this.

1496 *Mr. LaMalfa. No, I am just asking the question,
1497 though. Are you going to buy a bunch of electric vehicles?

1498 *Mr. Moore. Well, the other thing that we are trying to

1499 do to complement that is also look at electric plug-in spots
1500 on some of our campgrounds so that the people that do have
1501 electric vehicles can plug in while they are out visiting the
1502 recreation.

1503 *Mr. LaMalfa. And -- but we don't have enough money to
1504 help the Spearfish, South Dakota to be able to get their
1505 timber harvest done.

1506 *Mr. Moore. Well --

1507 *Mr. LaMalfa. I had better yield back, Mr. Chairman.
1508 Thank you.

1509 *Mr. Tiffany. We are off New Mexico time now. I would
1510 like to recognize the gentleman from Utah.

1511 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you.

1512 *Mr. Tiffany. And before you start, Mr. Curtis, the
1513 Chief has agreed that we are going to evaluate these numbers
1514 that are being put out. We are seeing some discrepancies.
1515 And we are going to work together with the Chairman of the
1516 full Committee and others to match our numbers up, and see
1517 exactly where we stand. And I really appreciate the Chief
1518 and his willingness to be able to do that.

1519 Mr. Curtis.

1520 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1521 Chief, thank you for being with us. I don't know how
1522 familiar you are with Utah. Have you ever been to Utah?

1523 *Mr. Moore. Lots of times.

1524 *Mr. Curtis. Two-thirds of the land in Utah is owned by
1525 the Federal Government. I have parts of my district that are
1526 90 percent. So you can see right off, if we are not getting
1527 the help and the coordination that we need from the Federal
1528 Government we are literally shut down as a State. And I
1529 would like to bring up some specifics with you today.

1530 As part of this experience in Utah and these amazing
1531 recreational areas, we are very dependent on local guides who
1532 can provide education, who can provide safety as people go
1533 into these areas. You can see sometimes if people go into
1534 these areas by themselves, it is hugely problematic. Yet our
1535 local guides are experiencing great frustration, as am I, in
1536 their ability to get permits to do that. And my office has
1537 been working with the leadership of the Salt Lake Ranger
1538 District to address this -- primarily, two issues: first,
1539 the refusal to turn temporary permits into long-term priority
1540 use permits; and more recently, the termination of access to
1541 the Lone Peak Wilderness Area, where guides have been going
1542 for decades, and was recently reaffirmed in the 2022 permits,
1543 as is consistent with the management plan.

1544 Yet, frankly, I am frustrated, they are frustrated, and
1545 I have sent you a detailed letter which I would like to enter
1546 into the record that explains the situation.

1547 The bottom line is that the supervisor of the Salt Lake
1548 Ranger District --

1549 *Mr. Tiffany. Without objection, so ordered.

1550 [The letter submitted for the record by Mr. Curtis

1551 follows:]

1552

1553 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

1554

1555 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you. The Utah Wasatch-Cache
1556 National Forest has been unwilling to work with us on finding
1557 creative ways to meet the needs for more priority permit
1558 holders, as opposed to temporary permit holders. Every time
1559 we meet with the Supervisor, there is a half-hearted attempt
1560 to address the limitations imposed on guides. However, a few
1561 weeks later those promises are unfulfilled and we are
1562 actually further away than when we started. That feels very
1563 punitive, and you can imagine how my constituents feel about
1564 that who are dependent on a living and provide a service to
1565 these people.

1566 For example, after reluctantly agreeing not to terminate
1567 all temporary guide and outfitter permits last year, only
1568 after a personal plea from me and meeting with them, the
1569 Supervisor subsequently revoked their access to the Lone Peak
1570 Wilderness Area, even though he told me he wouldn't. This
1571 has led to this amazing frustration, and I resent -- I regret
1572 that we couldn't resolve this with this local office and I
1573 have to bring it to here in a public manner to you, but I
1574 don't know what else to do.

1575 So my question is, will you take immediate steps to
1576 provide more long-term outfitting and guiding permits in the
1577 Salt Lake Ranger District?

1578 *Mr. Moore. Yes, Vice Chairman, I just recently became
1579 aware of this very issue that you are bringing up here and

1580 the letter that you sent to the Secretary. But the short
1581 answer is yes, of course. I want to work with you on a
1582 solution to this.

1583 *Mr. Curtis. Okay. If it is -- and listen, I get it, a
1584 lack of resources. I can't imagine what the people out in
1585 the field are asked to deal with, with the lack of resources.
1586 Can we get the resources needed into this district so these
1587 permits can be issued?

1588 *Mr. Moore. Will you allow me to take a look at this
1589 issue, get with the region and the forest so that I have a
1590 better understanding of what is really going on?

1591 But I will commit to you that I will work for a
1592 solution.

1593 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you. I will take you up on that,
1594 and would love to work with you personally. You can see how
1595 important this is, right? We have got these access areas.
1596 If we don't have the guides, people go in by themselves. We
1597 end up costing more resources than otherwise. And this is a
1598 livelihood for many people in our State. That is very, very
1599 important. And when they can't -- they get an answer and
1600 then it changes, you can see the frustration that we have.

1601 *Mr. Moore. Sure, sure.

1602 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you. So I would like to bring up
1603 another issue.

1604 Not far from there is the Black Hawk Campground. In

1605 2018 there was a serious fire up in Payson Canyon. It
1606 destroyed the campground, unfortunately. It was a very
1607 popular campground. It took a lot of pressure off other
1608 areas because of this campground. Also because of a lack of
1609 resources this campground has not been reopened since 2018.

1610 Likewise, I will just tell you, as I met with local
1611 officials in the area last week they told me there is a sense
1612 that the Forest Service is actually intentionally gradually
1613 shutting down more and more access. And by not reopening
1614 this campground, it plays into that narrative. The people on
1615 the ground are willing to volunteer. They are willing to
1616 bring local resources to get this campground back open.

1617 Likewise, will you work with me to figure out how we can
1618 get this campground back open?

1619 *Mr. Moore. Yes, I will work with you on that.

1620 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you. I can't ask for anything more
1621 than that, and I appreciate your attention to these very
1622 important issues.

1623 *Mr. Moore. Thank you.

1624 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you.

1625 I yield my time.

1626 *Mr. Tiffany. The gentleman yields, and I will turn to
1627 the Chairman of the full Committee, Mr. Westerman, for his
1628 questioning.

1629 *Mr. Westerman. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany.

1630 Thank you again, Chief Moore, for being here today.

1631 I think you and I agree on a lot of things in your
1632 testimony. In your written testimony you use the word
1633 "access" ten times, and I have said that we need to practice
1634 conservation through access.

1635 I was intrigued by the graphs, the very similar graphs
1636 that Mr. McClintock and Mr. LaMalfa put up that showed the
1637 harvest levels and the amount of forest fires, and how there
1638 was an inflection point. And I think we both agree that we
1639 want to see more management done on the forests to keep them
1640 healthy.

1641 So if we go back to where that inflection point was, it
1642 was in the 1980s and really in the 1990s where we quit
1643 harvesting, and the amount of forest fires started
1644 increasing. But if you look at the specific policies that
1645 happened then, in the West you had the spotted owl
1646 controversy. And the idea was we are going to stop
1647 harvesting and we are going to save the spotted owl. Can you
1648 tell me what is happening to spotted owl populations in the
1649 West since that policy went in place?

1650 *Mr. Moore. Well, I think, according to my knowledge,
1651 they have continued to decline.

1652 *Mr. Westerman. At about four percent per year is what
1653 I have read. So the policy hasn't worked to save the spotted
1654 owl, and we can, in hindsight, decades and decades later,

1655 look back and say this was a weaponized rule just to stop
1656 management on the forest, which was really a bad idea for the
1657 species and for the forest, as well.

1658 There was also another rule -- and I emphasize the word
1659 "rule," not a law -- put in place by Congress called the
1660 Roadless Rule. And I was visiting with folks from Finland
1661 the other day, and they were talking about how much pride
1662 they take in building roads and having access into their
1663 forests so they can manage better. And they were just
1664 befuddled by the idea that we build roads and then tear them
1665 out, which is a huge cost. And it is also a way to deny
1666 access when we put roads in and take them out.

1667 How critical are roads to doing not only management, but
1668 creating firebreaks and being able to get crews in to do fire
1669 suppression when needed? How critical are roads to that?

1670 *Mr. Moore. Well, I mean, yes, they are necessary,
1671 critical.

1672 *Mr. Westerman. Yes. And if we don't have roads, we
1673 end up spending a lot of money with tankers dropping fire
1674 retardants.

1675 And it just seems like we made some really bad decisions
1676 three or four decades ago that are really costing us on the
1677 backside right now.

1678 I have a lot of U.S. Forest Service land in my district,
1679 and I have always defended the Forest Service because I think

1680 the management on the Ouachita and the Ozark is as good as
1681 anywhere in the country, although there is room for
1682 improvement.

1683 Montgomery County in my district is -- about 85 percent
1684 of the forest are Forest Service lands. I held a mobile
1685 office there a few weeks ago, and 25 people came in, and
1686 their issue was access on the Forest Service land, roads that
1687 -- some of them had been given tickets for riding down roads
1688 that were closed that they didn't know were closed, and then
1689 roads being closed off.

1690 So in what world does it make sense that we don't create
1691 more access into these forests, and that we don't leave the
1692 roads in place after we go in and do management?

1693 I have seen it firsthand, a lot of money spent building
1694 a road, you go in and do the management, and then a lot of
1695 money spent tearing the road out and trying to return it
1696 back. Does that really make sense to do that?

1697 *Mr. Moore. Well, I think some of the logic around
1698 that, whether we can agree on that or not, is that -- and I
1699 don't know the specific reason, but sometimes we build spec
1700 roads so that the timber industry that won the bid can go in
1701 and remove the timber, and when they are done with it then we
1702 put the road to bed, you know, we close it. So I don't know
1703 if that is the situation there that you are referring to, but
1704 that has been somewhat of a common practice.

1705 *Mr. Westerman. Yes, these are roads that have been
1706 open for a long time. And it is the number-one complaint I
1707 hear on the forests in my district are people have access
1708 denied to go on these roads.

1709 There is a crazy rule where you can drive a log truck or
1710 a passenger vehicle, but you can't drive an ATV down these
1711 roads, and that just doesn't make sense to the general public
1712 when things like that happen.

1713 So I would hope that we would take another look at roads
1714 and access on the forest, and use some common sense there.
1715 And it would -- it seems to me like it would be a huge
1716 benefit to the Forest Service, as far as public relations go,
1717 when you don't have Members of Congress's constituents
1718 calling them all the time, saying, "Why is the Forest Service
1719 doing this crazy rule? Why are they -- is it their job to
1720 keep taxpaying Americans off of the public land?" Because
1721 that is how they see it.

1722 And with that I will yield back.

1723 *Mr. Tiffany. The gentleman yields, and I am going to
1724 take a few minutes here for questioning. And I want to
1725 piggyback on what the Chairman was just asking there.

1726 We just had that field hearing, as you know, Chief
1727 Moore, up in Hayward, Wisconsin in regards to access, and
1728 heard some very good stories. Currently, the Forest Service
1729 is decommissioning an average of 2,000 miles of road

1730 annually. Is that accurate?

1731 *Mr. Moore. I don't have that information available,
1732 but I wouldn't be surprised by it, sir.

1733 *Mr. Tiffany. Yes, I think that number is at -- I mean,
1734 think about that. That is 2,000 miles annually that are
1735 being reduced for access.

1736 And to the Chairman's point, that road sometimes that is
1737 built to high specifications, when it is removed it is
1738 removed at the cost to the contractor. So the contractor is
1739 having to reduce their bid as a result of having to pay for
1740 the cost of removing the road. So the Federal Treasury
1741 actually ends up with less money as a result of that.

1742 And so it goes back to what the Chairman was saying, is
1743 that it just doesn't make sense to the public, and especially
1744 many of them don't know what I just shared with you in
1745 regards to the road removal. But when they hear it, you
1746 know, they just go, duh, why are we doing these things?

1747 And so I guess my question is, this is a growing problem
1748 in regards to access. Will you commit to working with us to
1749 bring more access to the public?

1750 *Mr. Moore. Mr. Chairman, I -- yes, I want to be able
1751 to work with you and all of our publics on access. You know,
1752 it -- I also want you to be able to understand the challenges
1753 that we have, too, because sometimes we can bring up
1754 individual pieces and it is just -- you know, from a common

1755 sense standpoint, why are we doing this?

1756 So let me just share with you, though, as I look across
1757 the agency and what we are being asked to do. We are being
1758 asked to manage a road system of about 371,000 miles. And in
1759 that 371,000 miles of roads we are only funded at about 25
1760 percent to do that. I don't want to close roads, and yet I
1761 am not funded to maintain the road system that we currently
1762 have. So it is a real dilemma for us in the Forest Service
1763 to be able to do that.

1764 And so I am not surprised. I am disappointed that we
1765 have some common sense kinds of things that we can't come to
1766 an agreement, and I want to work on those types of things.

1767 *Mr. Tiffany. I would just share with you that I think
1768 there are people locally that are willing to help in regards
1769 to this. I think there needs to be greater engagement in
1770 that regard, because that is what we heard at the hearing, is
1771 that there are people, including private individuals, that --
1772 they are willing to help out in this process to be able to
1773 make this happen.

1774 The other thing is that some would say that the Forest
1775 Service is far too passive in pushing back against those who
1776 want to put the restrictions in place. In fact, some are in
1777 the Forest Service, which -- you have a broad range of
1778 ideologies, but that there is some that -- in the Forest
1779 Service that actually want to see greater restrictions. And

1780 that is where your leadership is --

1781 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

1782 *Mr. Tiffany. -- is valued so much is to be able to cut
1783 through that, where somebody's personal beliefs enter into
1784 public decision-making.

1785 *Mr. Moore. But Mr. Chairman, can I ask you -- let's
1786 take a look at that.

1787 *Mr. Tiffany. Do you want us to report the employees
1788 that aren't --

1789 *Mr. Moore. No, no, I want to be able to go out on that
1790 road that you are talking about, and let's see what is
1791 possible talking with some of the publics there.

1792 *Mr. Tiffany. Okay. We will invite you up to meet my
1793 good friend, Senator Rob Stafsholt, and he will give you a
1794 tour, just as we had.

1795 *Mr. Moore. Great.

1796 *Mr. Tiffany. So, yes, let's see if we can do that.

1797 And by the way, I want to thank -- your staff in
1798 Wisconsin was there, Director Youngblood, and we really
1799 appreciate that she attended that access hearing.

1800 So the 2025 budget requests 124 million for new land
1801 acquisitions. Is that a good idea with a backlog of
1802 maintenance?

1803 *Mr. Moore. Well, you know, I -- here again, let's look
1804 at the specifics of what has been requested, because

1805 sometimes, you know, land acquisitions is for better access
1806 to the public lands. Sometimes it is for more efficient
1807 management.

1808 And so, without knowing these specifics of a particular
1809 area, I would say there is different reasons for it.

1810 *Mr. Tiffany. Yes, I think with the maintenance backlog
1811 that is going on, I mean, it should be a very high bar that
1812 we be adding to the Federal estate at this point when we hear
1813 that there is this whole maintenance backlog. How much more
1814 money do you need?

1815 *Mr. Moore. Well, if you doubled our budget right now,
1816 Mr. Chairman, we would certainly make that work, but it
1817 wouldn't be enough to do everything that is being asked.
1818 That is how underfunded -- and I just gave you an example, it
1819 was a 371,000-mile road system, and we are only funded at 25
1820 percent of it.

1821 *Mr. Tiffany. So doubling the road budget would
1822 accomplish --

1823 *Mr. Moore. Well, another example, you know, because I
1824 can give you a specific number, but in general, when I look
1825 at the deferred maintenance backlog, you know, of over \$8
1826 billion, 5.45 billion of that is for roads, bridges, and
1827 dams. And so there is a lot of work to be done out there,
1828 and we are just not funded even to maintain the system that
1829 we have.

1830 *Mr. Tiffany. Looking at those charts, two of them that
1831 you saw earlier over to my right, isn't that one of the ways
1832 that we could get there, is to harvest more wood?

1833 *Mr. Moore. Well, yes, there is no bullet, silver
1834 bullet, so to speak. But yes, I mean, there is a lot of
1835 different ways to help us get there.

1836 *Mr. Tiffany. What is a -- in your testimony you
1837 referred to green jobs, amongst other things, a list of
1838 things that -- there is benefits. What is a green job?

1839 *Mr. Moore. Well, I don't know that I use that very
1840 much, but a green job is one of those jobs that I think is
1841 going to be working with the environment to keep it healthy
1842 and resilient.

1843 *Mr. Tiffany. So it was a recommendation that you put
1844 "green job" in your testimony, I take it. You don't have to
1845 answer that question. That is fine.

1846 What is old growth?

1847 *Mr. Moore. Well, it depends on the species in terms of
1848 how you define that. But I think, in general, you know, it
1849 is large, older trees.

1850 *Mr. Tiffany. Is it defined?

1851 *Mr. Moore. Yes, it is defined by species, but it is
1852 the old -- basically, just for simple language, it is the
1853 older trees that we have in the forest.

1854 *Mr. Tiffany. So in an executive summary here that

1855 comes from both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land
1856 Management, it says the terms "old growth forest" and
1857 "mature forest" have not been consistently defined. Would
1858 you agree with that characterization?

1859 *Mr. Moore. Yes, I would.

1860 *Mr. Tiffany. Because just this past week some
1861 constituents up in my district posed that question and -- to
1862 staff, and they did not have an answer, similar to what you
1863 are saying here. It is not defined, correct?

1864 *Mr. Moore. I say it is defined by different species.
1865 Different species have different age classes of what is
1866 considered old growth.

1867 *Mr. Tiffany. But it is not defined, as it says in --

1868 *Mr. Moore. Yes, you know, just trying to keep it
1869 simple, there is no agreed-upon, I think, generally agreed-
1870 upon definition, other than if you look at it by species,
1871 which varies.

1872 *Mr. Tiffany. So I think the Biden Administration has --
1873 -- they came out with a Land Management Plan Direction for Old
1874 Growth Forest Conditions Across the National Forest System.
1875 You are familiar with that?

1876 *Mr. Moore. I am.

1877 *Mr. Tiffany. And the Forest Service should consider --
1878 well, the Forest Service is considering amending 128 Land
1879 Management Plans, is that right?

1880 *Mr. Moore. That is correct, yes.

1881 *Mr. Tiffany. And doing it through a single EIS?

1882 *Mr. Moore. You mean for old growth?

1883 *Mr. Tiffany. Yes.

1884 *Mr. Moore. Yes.

1885 *Mr. Tiffany. Is that consistent with the law, to amend
1886 those 128 Land Management Plans, individual Land Management
1887 Plans, with one EIS?

1888 *Mr. Moore. Yes, yes. I mean, obviously, we can do
1889 that. But you have got to amend all 128 plans.

1890 Right now, the one of the bigger challenges we have with
1891 old growth is there is no consistent way of how we manage old
1892 growth. And so this Forest Plan amendment is to come up with
1893 a framework for how we manage old growth, but also leave
1894 flexibility at the local level to make some decisions in how
1895 it is managed.

1896 *Mr. Tiffany. Are you familiar with the 2012 Planning
1897 Rule?

1898 *Mr. Moore. I used to be. Somewhat still.

1899 *Mr. Tiffany. Yes. I mean, it rings a bell, right? I
1900 am not asking you for specifics here, trying to trap you,
1901 anything like that.

1902 So here it says among the 2012 rule's purposes was to
1903 provide for a transparent, coordinated process. Whereas,
1904 with what is being proposed with this old growth Land

1905 Management Plan, it says the Forest Service's willingness is
1906 now -- to now convert its commitment to a transparent,
1907 collaborative process. Isn't there a distinction between
1908 collaboration and coordination?

1909 *Mr. Moore. I mean, I think, generally, yes.

1910 *Mr. Tiffany. I mean, isn't coordination -- isn't that
1911 identified in the law, that it is a specific process in
1912 working with local municipalities?

1913 *Mr. Moore. Yes, it is about informing and being
1914 informed.

1915 *Mr. Tiffany. So if 128 Land Management Plans are done
1916 under one EIS, how are you going to coordinate with all those
1917 local municipalities?

1918 *Mr. Moore. Well, it is going to be done at the local
1919 individual forest level. You know, our approach is we
1920 basically overhauled the whole planning process within the
1921 agency. And so we have three planning teams across the
1922 country: one in the West, one in the Midwest, and one in the
1923 East. And these teams will be doing most of the legwork on
1924 the analysis.

1925 And a part of the issue we have had in the agency, too,
1926 is that, you know, you don't have the skill set at every
1927 forest to do this, and there is so much other work to be
1928 done. And so these national teams or these regional teams
1929 will take most of the brunt of the work from the forest, so

1930 they are not overly encumbered with a forest plan revision.

1931 *Mr. Tiffany. Let's take one, for example, the
1932 Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Wisconsin. Do you
1933 fully commit to coordinate with local units of government
1934 when --

1935 *Mr. Moore. Well, that --

1936 *Mr. Tiffany. -- creating this new plan?

1937 *Mr. Moore. Yes, that is an ordinary part of what we
1938 should be doing out there, Mr. Chairman.

1939 *Mr. Tiffany. Well, those folks are ready, willing, and
1940 able to work with you in regards to this, and I appreciate
1941 you making that commitment.

1942 And now I am way overboard on Wisconsin time here, so I
1943 appreciate that you would take the additional time here to be
1944 as forthright as possible, and I appreciate you taking the
1945 time this morning, Chief Moore, to set a little time aside to
1946 have a real personal discussion in regards to this stuff.

1947 We will be doing some follow-up. We appreciate you and
1948 your staff engaging with us in regards to that, because we
1949 are interested. It is clear that you are sincere about
1950 wanting to have the best outcomes possible, and we want to
1951 work with you to be able to do that.

1952 Members of the Subcommittee may have some additional
1953 questions for you, and we will ask that the witness respond
1954 to these in writing. Under Committee rule three, members of

1955 the Subcommittee must submit questions to the Subcommittee
1956 clerk by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 7, 2024. The hearing
1957 record will be held open for ten business days for those
1958 responses.

1959 And if there is no further business -- it sure doesn't
1960 appear so, we are pretty lonely here, Mr. Chief -- without
1961 objection, the Subcommittee on Federal Lands stands
1962 adjourned.

1963 [Whereupon, at 12:18 p.m., the Subcommittee was
1964 adjourned.]